Psychic Powers

HELEN TODD

T
11.3

PSYCHIC POWERS

Theosophical Study No. XI

Psychic Powers

BY
HELEN TODD

1975
THE THEOSOPHICAL PUBLISHING HOUSE LTD.,
68, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3BU,
in collaboration with Point Loma Publications, Ltd.,
POINT LOMA, U.S.A.

© Point Loma Publications, Inc. U.S.A.

ISBN 7229-5044-6

PRINTED IN INDIA

At the Vasanta Press, The Theosophical Society,
Adyar, Madras 600020

EDITORS' PREFACE

Nature exists and Man exists, and somewhere, undisguised by man's own sophistry, there must be available the wisdom and learning which tells us *why* and *how*. As we ponder the question it seems an inevitable conclusion that somewhere there must be preserved a recording, a gathering of facts or 'laws', a formulation in human language, of the truth concerning Man and Nature. There must be a basic source from which sciences, philosophies and great religions have sprung.

H. P. Blavatsky, in her writings of immense intellectual and spiritual force and power—still not fully appreciated—points to that Source. She called it the Ancient Wisdom, the Sacred Science, the *Gupta-Vidyā*, and gave to it the Greek name of *Theosophia*, Theosophy, knowledge and wisdom such as the gods or divinities live by. This Ancient Wisdom, she declared, has always been is existence, though not always publicly known, having come down the ages tested and checked by generations of Great Seers. It may be called the Facts of Being, the 'laws' or workings of Nature.

In this series of twelve Theosophical Studies this Ancient Wisdom is explained with clarity of presentation and logical appeal by students and

scholars who have devoted a lifetime to theosophic study. Above all they have been governed by strict honesty and adherence to the teachings as originally reported and recorded.

The first booklet, "What Is Theosophy?" outlines the over-all teachings, presenting a general picture. Succeeding booklets cover in greater detail the subjects of Reincarnation, Karma, The Seven Principles of Man, Death and the After-Death States of Consciousness, Evolution, Man's Divine Parentage, the Origin of Man and of the Earth, The Doctrine of Cycles, The Ladder of Life, Hierarchies, The Astral Light, Psychic Powers, and Theosophy and Christianity.

It is hoped that these Studies will be received with an open mind, for in them the earnest searcher will find keys that are indispensable to an understanding of the Universe and of Man.

HELEN TODD
W. EMMETT SMALL

CONTENTS

I—Introductory 1

II—Fundamental Ideas 9
The Astral Light 10
The Nature of the Psyche 12
The Astral Senses 15
Study Necessary 18

III—Psychology and Psychic Powers 20

IV—Mediumship and Its Dangers 27
The Ordinary Trance Medium 30
Materializations 34
Poltergeists 36
Mediumship an Undesirable Profession 38
Mediator Versus Medium 40

V—Hypnotism 43
Self-Hypnotization 50
Psychologization in General 52
Will-Prayer 54

VI—Clairvoyance and Other Psychic Powers 56
Clairvoyance and Clairaudience 56
Telepathy 61
Crystal-Gazing 63
Psychometry 63
Automatic Writing 65

VII—The Theosophical Objective 70

I

INTRODUCTORY

THE craze to obtain superphysical powers, so apparent today, is nothing new. Nor is the appearance of such powers a recent evolutionary development. The literature of every people is full of references, historical as well as fictional, to certain individuals who can do things of a 'magical' character, which the laws of physical science, known today, do not explain.

Such persons may be able to talk with 'spirits': they hear phantom voices and see visions, and often think they are guided by angelic beings. They may be able to conjure up visions of the past, or of things happening at a distance, or they can foretell the future. Sometimes they are able to over-ride the normal laws of nature by handling red-hot coals and similar things without being beurnd. Sometimes they are able under trance to draw and write things that are ordinarily quite beyond their capacities. Others may have the power of exerting a sort of enchantment or fascination over their fellows and of making these latter do their bidding; or they can heal the sick by the 'laying on of hands,' and in other ways.

It is noted that in the presence or atmosphere of a certain type of such individuals strange happenings take place. 'Raps' and other sounds may be heard that are caused by no known agency; or there

are the ringing of bells and sounds of musical instruments. Furniture perhaps moves of itself, and other household objects become disarranged. There may appear in the air what seem to be human hands and faces and ultimately complete figures.

The above examples, and many others that might be enumerated, are all included under the general category of the psychic powers. In their essential nature these powers are not evil, though they vary widely in quality, ranging from those which are closely associated with the physical nature of man to those which work more in harmony with his spiritual nature.

Then too, religious belief and custom has always profoundly affected the status of such powers, and it seems likely that their development along lower or higher lines has run parallel with, and has been a fundamental part of, the growth and influence of religion among the people. For instance, at a time when the Mysteries were still influencing the life of ancient Greece, a high type of clairvoyant was used in the sacred oracles, the priestess on the tripod being considered holy, and cherished and protected from contamination of any sort. The Temples of Aesculapius in Greece, where the art of healing was highly developed, and where the most remarkable cures were performed, were a recognised part of the Mysteries themselves.

On the other hand, during the Dark Ages in Europe most unwholesome types of 'psychic epidemics' occurred, connected in some cases with sorcery. And as late as the seventeenth and

eighteenth centuries psychics were still believed to be witches and were put to death by the Church.

There are, in fact, certain cyclic periods in history when there occur unusual outcroppings of these psychic manifestations. At such times the numbers of these abnormal individuals increase. Others through curiosity and the element of wonder are carried along on the psychic wave. The whole matter is given undue importance and an emphasis which almost always reacts harmfully upon those thus engaged, because they are ignorantly invoking strange forces which they cannot control. We are at the present time in such a cycle. It is with this cycle that we are particularly concerned in this Manual: how it is affecting Western people, and what light Theosophy throws upon the whole matter.

One such cycle started in the middle of last century with the rise of modern Spiritualism. The movement spread like an epidemic, first through America and later to some extent in the European countries. About this time there had been a growing interest in cures effected by means of hypnotism, and combined with the new possibilities these experiments suggested, the spiritualistic movement was welcomed as a new revelation. Reputed clairvoyants developed into mediums, 'spirit circles' were formed in many families, and it was obvious that a great many people were rushing headlong into experimentation and practices whose dangers they little dreamed of.

Already by the last quarter of the nineteenth century much harm had been done, both in the disastrous effect on mediums themselves, and in the

tremendous interest that had been aroused in every and any sort of abnormal power. A glamour had been cast over it all and many were feverishly hunting after the most unwholesome sorts of inner development with complete ignorance of the nature of what they were after.

Part of the mission of the Theosophical Society, founded in 1875, was to call a halt to this mad rush for phenomena and powers. This was to be done principally in two ways:

(a) By trying to illumine the hearts and minds of men with a spiritual light which so far transcended the will-o'-the-wisp flickerings of psychism, that the latter would lose their fascination.

(b) By presenting a scientifically sound rationale of these lower powers, thereby giving logical and convincing proof, first, of the existence of such powers, and second, of their extreme danger.

It was along these lines that H. P. Blavatsky, when she first came to America in 1873, had been instructed to work with the Spiritualists. In her own words:

> I am here in this country sent by my Lodge on behalf of Truth in modern spiritualism, and it is my most sacred duty to unveil what is, and expose what is not. . . .*

But beyond a certain point they were not willing to accept her explanations of phenomena based on

* E. R. Corson, *Some Unpublished Letters of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky*, p. 127-28.

the Ancient Wisdom which she had been taught. Many of them even repudiated her, and thereby they lost a valuable champion and gave up the opportunity offered to them to put their experimentations upon a sound basis and at the same time satisfy the natural human longing for evidence of post-mortem survival.

There was, further, the counter-current of materialism that had to be reckoned with. While the simple-minded, as well as others of a mystical type, were being sucked into the psychic vortex, the great army of the skeptics saw in these manifestations only trickery and hallucination; and since both these factors are abundantly found in the annals of Spiritualism, the skeptics had a pretty good case.

The situation was a difficult and peculiar one because the psychic demonstrations which, it had been hoped, would jolt a materialistic world into an awakening to a wider outlook, got out of hand, so to speak. Since the group of Spiritualists had become utterly useless as an instrument for serious study, H. P. Blavatsky herself, under the direction and often with the aid of her Teachers, was then instructed to give proof of her own supernormal powers.* Her purpose in this was to show the skeptics that beyond their circumscribed sphere of physical matter was an invisible world operating under its own unerring laws which, for one who understood them, could be made to act with definite and demonstrable results. Further, as

* A description of these may be found in much of the early Theosophical literature, as, for instance, *The Occult World*, by A. P. Sinnett.

W. Q. Judge says, she exhibited these marvelous feats

for the purpose of showing those who were learning from her that the human subject is a complicated and powerful being, not to be classed, as science loves to do, with mere matter and motion.

—*The Path*, Vol. VIII, May, 1893

H. P. Blavatsky was bitterly disappointed in the general attitude of the scientists towards her entirely disinterested efforts. Writing in her magazine *Lucifer*, in February, 1888, she says:

Never were the phenomena presented in any other character than that of instances of a power *over perfectly natural though unrecognised forces*, and incidentally over matter, possessed by certain individuals who have attained to a larger and higher knowledge of the Universe than has been reached by scientists and theologians, or can ever be reached by them, by the roads they are now respectively pursuing. Yet this power is latent in all men, and could, in time, be wielded by anyone who would cultivate the knowledge and conform to the conditions necessary for its development.

She continues:

Therefore, it is hardly to be wondered at, that *word* came to abandon phenomena and let the ideas of Theosophy stand on their own intrinsic merit.

When the Mahātmas who started the Theosophical Society were urged to cause a newspaper published in India to appear in London on the day

of publication, or *vice versa*, to convince the skeptics once for all, their answer came:

Very true, we work by natural not supernatural means and laws. But as on the one hand Science would find itself unable (in its present state) to account for the wonders given in its name, and on the other, the ignorant masses would still be left to view the phenomenon in the light of a miracle; everyone who would thus be made a witness to the occurrence would be thrown off his balance and the results would be deplorable.*

They declined to perform the experiment, pointing out further that, on the one hand, no phenomena, however startling, would ever convince the skeptics; and on the other hand, that in order to prevent superstitious practices arising, a healthy element of doubt should be preserved. Further, as greater and greater proofs would be demanded, the Mahātmas themselves would end by finding themselves on the point of breaking the unalterable esoteric law, namely, that the secrets of the occult arts shall never be divulged except to those who have undergone the most strict and thorough discipline in their own schools of training.

A century has now passed since H. P. Blavatsky brought her spiritual message to the West, and we are seeing evidence in certain quarters of a more serious and genuine scientific approach to a recognition of the hidden powers in man. But much remains to be done in educating people as to the dangers of psychism. We are opening upon

* See *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, Letter No. I.

a new cycle which will see the progressive development of new faculties in man. As the human race advances it will inevitably become more finely organized both physically and psychically, and will come gradually more and more in contact with forces, powers and beings that belong to a more subtle plane of existence. What Theosophy has to give in the way of explanation and preparation is needed *right now* as the introduction to a new cycle of development.

II

FUNDAMENTAL IDEAS

THE nature of the psychic powers and faculties cannot be understood without a comprehension of certain basic conceptions. These are as necessary as charts are in sailing an unfamiliar sea.

First we must dismiss the idea that anything can be brought about by supernatural means. No divine being can suspend the working of natural law. On the other hand, neither can we say with the materialists that everything can be explained by the laws of *physical* nature alone.

The teaching of the Ancient Wisdom is that there is indeed more to the universe than can be measured by our physical senses—or by our laboratory researches, which are but an extension of the power of our sensory perceptions. Our physical universe is but a reflexion of a vast and invisible realm, filled full with many grades of conscious living beings. It is their combined activities which bring about what we call the ' laws ' of nature, but which might better be called the ' habits ' of nature.

Mankind forms one group of these invisible entities—because, after all, the conscious thinking self of us is invisible. The portion of the universe

that we call ' visible ' is merely that aspect of it for which we have developed organs of perception: the eye, the ear, and so on. Those aspects of the universe that we cannot perceive with our senses are not far away, in some distant stretches of space, but are right with us here and now, interpenetrating our physical sphere and impinging upon our inner selves at every moment of the day and night.

It is a mistake to suppose that invisibility necessarily implies spirituality. Assuredly spiritual energies have their source in the unseen realms of nature, but evil energies do likewise. The physical world is like a great arena for the enactment of the pageant of life, which we as human beings are at one and the same time taking part in and beholding. But this gorgeous and sometimes very tragic presentment only feebly depicts the unseen forces, both exalted and degraded, which move the actors to noble or to sordid deeds.

The Astral Light

Those substances and energies of invisible nature impinging most closely upon our physical sphere are known in Theosophy under the general term the Astral Light.* It would perhaps be more accurate to say that its grosser portions thus impinge upon our sphere; for in its highest reaches it merges indefinitely into the purest Cosmic Aether, the source of all intelligence in the universe. The astral light surrounds and interpenetrates our globe as an ethereal essence, so sensitive and plastic

* See No. XI of this series: *The Astral Light.*

that it receives and retains in its subtle substance an impression of all that takes place on earth, and of all the thoughts and emotional energies emanated by man. But it is more than a photographic plate, a mere recorder. It is a great crucible

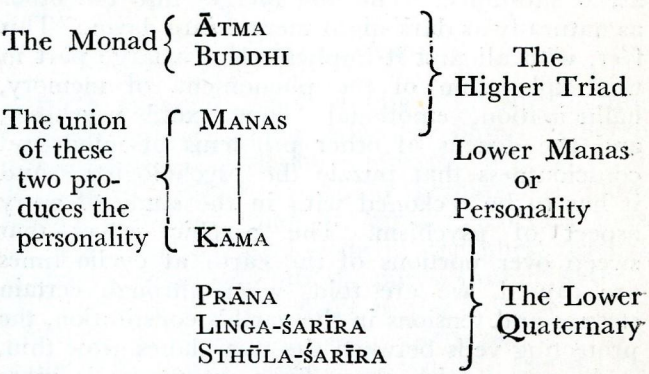
> in which all the effluxes and emanations of the Earth, whether psychical, moral, or physical, are received, and after undergoing therein a myriad of ethereal alchemical changes are reflected or radiated back to the Earth . . . thus producing epidemic troubles or diseases, whether these latter be physical, psychic, or moral.
>
> —G. DE PURUCKER, *The Esoteric Tradition*, p. 953

There is, in fact, a constant interchange between what we call the physical plane and the astral plane. No sharp dividing line exists between the finest grade of physical matter and the densest grade of astral substance. The one merges into the other as naturally as dark night merges into dawn. This fact, with all that it implies, plays a large part in the explanation of the phenomena of memory, hallucination, emotional 'complexes,' psychoses, and the dozens of other problems of mind and consciousness that puzzle the psychologists. And it has to be reckoned with in the study of every aspect of psychism. The psychic waves that sweep over portions of the earth at cyclic times are caused, we are told, when through certain stresses and tensions in the earth's constitution, the protecting veils between the two planes grow thin, and contact with these finer substances is more easily made by peculiarly constituted individuals.

One of the chief characteristics of the astral light is its deceptive quality. Its whirling and eddying currents, its confused jumble of pictures, and its irresponsible as well as often evil denizens, bewilder and lead astray all but the highly trained seer. The ordinary man is not developed along the lines that would allow him a safe entry into these realms. Nor does the mere ability to enter them guarantee one's safety therein.

The Nature of the Psyche

Man, like the universe, has an inner nature ranging from the purely astral to the highest spiritual. His complex make-up is explained in detail in another study of this series,* but for our convenience we here reproduce the diagram therein used.



* Manual No. IV, *The Seven Principles of Man.*

The Monad (Ātma and Buddhi) represents that high spiritual source of all that is noble and inspiring in our human existence. The lower three principles in the Diagram (Prāna, Linga-śarīra, Sthūla-śarīra) are the body of man, both astral and physical, and the vitality that courses through them as long as our life on earth lasts. But what we are particularly concerned with for our present study is the intermediate portion of the Diagram, for it is the seat of the ordinary individual, made up of mind (Manas) and emotions (Kāma).

A simpler division of the human constitution is the threefold: spirit-soul-body, *soul* corresponding to our middle Duad, Kāma-Manas. The Greek word for soul is *psyche*, and from this root such words as psychic, psychism and psychology have been formed. The use of this Greek root is accurate because the studies with which these words are associated all deal with the nature and functioning of the soul or psyche, even when the basic significance has been lost in a more materialistic concept.

The Theosophical sevenfold division of man, however, gives a deeper insight into the nature of the soul than does the threefold.

As a little study will show, our diagram suggests that Manas (mind) partakes of the spiritual nature of its parent above, and forms with it the Higher Triad. Further, that Kāma (desire) when linked with the body-part of man forms a lower group of four, the Lower Quaternary. But what makes man as he is today is the union of Manas

and Kāma. It is this Duad that holds the key-position in our present evolutionary make-up. It is for this Duad that life on earth is necessary, and its dual aspect explains the many contradictions, surprises and disappointments of human nature.

This Duad, then, is the seat of our psychical nature. Our psyche is thus an undeveloped being. It has the use of all the powers of the human constitution to carve for itself a glorious destiny: will, imagination, thought, desire; but as yet it has not learned how to use them with wisdom. Its character is unstable. It is torn between its urge to understand and interpret through its own powers the will of its spiritual parent; and on the other hand its urge to identify itself with the animal nature below. It is drawn hither and thither by the attractions of the senses. Its purposes are divided. It is in fact that familiar part of ourself which needs no description.

In the psychically healthy individual this 'conflict' assumes the nature of a stimulus to self-mastery. There is harmony and symmetry of development. Health means 'wholeness,' and where psychic health exists one finds those characteristics that belong to the well-balanced person: poise, clarity of thought and firmness of purpose, a sense of proportion, often a sense of humor tempered by a natural kindly feeling. We have in fact what is often spoken of as a well-adjusted personality.

Psychic ill-health occurs when the harmonious working together of all the factors in man is broken. This often happens when the psyche attempts to assume a position in the general economy of the

human being to which it is not entitled; and there is little doubt that, could we see the chain of circumstances through several lives perhaps that lead up to our present psychic ills, we should find that somewhere along the way we had, perhaps by imperceptible degrees, built up the condition we now are trying to overcome. For example, seeds of jealousy, of over-weening pride, of hate or fear, once sown in the psychic nature will grow and flourish and in time produce their crop of psychic ills.

The particular phase of psychic ill-health that we are concerned with here is that serious aspect shown by many people who possess what are called psychic powers. In the ordinary medium, for instance, there is always an actual dislocation of the psyche. The danger of this state will be discussed in a later chapter; suffice it to say here that the involuntary disjunction of this intermediate principle is never a desirable thing, for it makes the unfortunate individual the prey of evil entities in the astral light which crave a vicarious existence on earth as a means to satisfy their unfulfilled desires. Though purity and natural goodness do act to a certain extent as a protection to the medium, still there is likely to be a progressive deterioration in the medium's character, and his weaknesses, however mild, may prove to be the entering wedge for undesirable astral visitants to 'control' him.

The Astral Senses

The true Self in man has been evolving appropriate vehicles for growth and experience through

long ages, and our inner economy is most marvelously regulated. Our spiritual nature provides us with the power to develop and express in ever greater degree our latent faculties. Our body serves as a means of contact with the outside world and with our fellows. It further acts as a protection, a barrier as it were, to the inroads of the astral plane. Our senses act in a selective and limiting way, and this is as much a blessing as it is an inconvenience. Until we are unaffected, at least in some degree, by the influences penetrating by means of our senses to our psychic nature, it were foolish to wish for this barrier to be broken. Yet this is what happens with those who crave to possess psychic powers. The ordinary man is to a certain extent imprisoned within his body. The psychic is in danger of breaking this guard, and finding himself in a realm where he is more or less helpless.

The fact is that for every one of our physical senses we have an astral counterpart which is the true center of sense perception. It is through these astral centers that the ego within really hears, sees, tastes, smells, and touches. Without them, the physical senses would be useless. But at present these astral sense-centers are in their turn dependent upon their physical replicas. We cannot use them consciously and independently as yet. This will come in the future as a further stage of development. When that time comes it will be natural for us to use these astral senses *at will*, and then we shall know at first hand a great deal about the inner aspects of the universe which are now hidden

from us. We must wait, however, until 'the inner man has grown to maturity,' as W. Q. Judge expresses it in his pamphlet *Culture of Concentration.*

The astral senses are part of the astral body (the Linga-śarīra of our diagram). The term 'astral body' is not a figure of speech; it signifies a body as definitely material as is the physical body, but of matter far more subtle, more tenuous and, of course, invisible. This ethereal double is the pattern body which the physical instrument slavishly follows. It has its etheric circulations, its nerve centres, its various organs; but so closely is it enmeshed in its physical replica that under normal conditions it is unable to act independently of the latter.

Those who advertise to teach for a price the power of roaming at will in the astral have no idea of the difficulties involved, nor of the dangers they invite where even a partial success may be attained. There are also those who profess to know of such dangers but who do not sufficiently warn against them.

The future development of the astral senses, suggested by Mr. Judge's article mentioned above, is but a phase of a greater power that is to be ours: that of being able through conscious will and thought to travel where we will in a refined 'astral body' of our own making, free from the burden of the 'too too solid flesh'. It was such a power that Apollonius of Tyana used when he suddenly vanished before the very eyes of Domitian and the crowd gathered at his trial in Rome, and

appeared before his friend an hour later at the grotto of Puteoli.*

Psychics at the present time shadow forth powers that will be natural to us in the distant future. But most psychics are not symmetrically developed, nor do they know anything about the true nature of their prematurely awakened ability. They may have one astral sense partially developed, as for instance the astral left eye or right eye; such being the case of the ordinary clairvoyant. Or they may be able to extend an astral arm, as some mediums do. But what they are able to see or sense is always one-sided, scrappy and misleading; and as the power is used involuntarily, they have no guarantee that they can stop it when they will.

The Theosophist does not consider it a fortunate thing for persons at the present time to have abnormally developed astral senses. It is in nearly all cases an affliction. It is always a responsibility.

Study Necessary

It is necessary to study the subject of psychism in order to put the matter entirely on a rational basis. Too often the word 'psychic' is veiled in a sort of mysterious atmosphere which enhances its attractions. People speak of having psychic experiences as though they were set apart from the oridnary run of mortals in some special, favored way. Or they have a dread of the very mention of the word, saying that it conjures up in their minds a host of vague terrors. Neither of these

* See *Isis Unveiled*, II, p. 597.

attitudes is desirable. One might as well be a rank materialist, scoffing at the very idea of the existence of invisible worlds, as to hold these false notions that cloud the understanding and lead one astray.

As a matter of fact, when we speak of the psychic world, we simply mean that invisible realm, where our lower mind naturally functions. Here our psychic nature is active all the time; and it is this very psychic nature that provides us the means by which we can act on this physical plane. To be sure it is the seat of temptation and desire, of mental and emotional illusion; but it can also, when trained and controlled, be the transmitter of the vitality of the Spiritual Self into active expression in daily life. Nay, more, it is *the only means* the Spiritual Self has of functioning here on earth.

The abnormal development of the psychic nature, producing what are generally understood as the psychic powers, would be recognised, like all abnormalities, to be a mere side issue, if its nature and development were studied today as once they were studied in the ancient science of Psychology, which H. P. Blavatsky speaks of as 'the most important branch of the Occult Sciences.' *

* *Studies in Occultism*, II. 43.

III

PSYCHOLOGY AND PSYCHIC POWERS

THE subject of psychology does not rightfully belong under the heading of psychic powers; rather should we say that the study of psychic powers rightfully belongs under the heading of psychology, as a branch of the general subject.

Some scientific investigators of psychic matters have evidently held the same view. In a letter to Sir William Crookes written in 1871, E. W. Cox says, in discussing the mysterious powers that 'sensitives' possess:

> I venture to suggest that the force be termed the *Psychic Force*; the persons in whom it is manifested in extraordinary power *Psychics*; and the science relating to it *Psychism*, as being a branch of *Psychology*.

Psychology is defined as 'the science of the nature, functions and phenomena of the human soul or mind.' But H. P. Blavatsky in *Isis Unveiled* (I, xxvii-xxviii), defines psychology thus:

> *Psychology*, or the great, and in our days, so neglected science of the soul, both as an entity distinct from the spirit and in its relations with the spirit and body.

It is obvious, then, that every conceivable aspect of man's make-up and activity, other than those

aspects which are purely physiological (and it is a question whether there are any that could come under that category) could logically be included in some branch of the science of psychology.

But modern psychologists are just beginning the great task of developing a science; and they have limited themselves right from the start by trying to do away with a ' soul ' and ' mind ' as an entity *per se*: the first, because as scientists they do not feel justified in entering the realms of metaphysics; the second, in an attempt to avoid the ever-puzzling problem of the relation of mind to matter. Descartes, it will be remembered, laid down the principle that mind and matter are two opposing substances having absolutely nothing in common. The modern psychologist prefers to think of man as a body-mind unity—a Theosophical concept, also, when freed from any materialistic implications. Instead of ' the science of consciousness and behavior ' he prefers to speak of ' the science of individual experience.' On this basis he tries to analyse such phenomena as sensation, emotion memory, imagination, aesthetic feelings, desire, understanding, belief, and all types of thought-processes.

As a simple example: The ordinary man is not concerned with an explanation of his reactions to outward stimuli. For him there is no mystery in the fact that a gun-shot will make him start; that he finds certain kinds of music pleasing, and others not; or that an almost-forgotten tune may bring such a rush of unpleasant memories that he is put in a gloomy mood for hours. But the psychologist is concerned with the explanation of these things.

He does not take them for granted. He wants to know why.

The effect of the gun-shot may undoubtedly be explained purely physiologically. But can the other two reactions? What, exactly, are moods? What are memories? Have they, indeed, any real existence? When the psychologist banishes any soul or any mind from his scheme, any inner entity which *experiences*, he is hard put to it to explain even such simple reactions as the above. He must find some other explanation for obvious functions of mind and soul. The various schools of theoretical psychology have thus elaborated the most complicated systems and developed a difficult and highly technical terminology to explain the simplest phenomena of experience.

But whatever terms are used, the idea of an ego or self is implicit in all systems except the most materialistic. Some such conception is continually cropping up. The banished ego slips in by a back door, so to speak, and has to be reckoned with. As a matter of fact it is often only a sort of 'temporary' ego that is postulated, a result of the interaction of brain and body, and called by such names as 'ego-complex' or 'self-system'. Little or nothing is known about the spiritual genealogy of the true egoic center in man and its progressive development through many lives on earth, bringing into each life what it had made of itself in the past.

Yet philosophies of the past have all taught of a 'self' in man; sages have studied the constitution of man's inner nature with scientific exactitude.

It would seem fool-hardy to ignore their testimony as to the existence of the Self and the nature of the complex vehicles it uses for expression during its evolution on this earth. The very universality of such teachings, their intellectual profundity, and their ability to account for all the phenomena of human experience, both normal and abnormal, warrant their serious study; and it is one of the aims of Theosophists today to bring this knowledge of man's inner nature to the attention of the modern world.

Theosophy is, indeed, like a key to a code. Without the key a code is unintelligible, though one may make any number of observations about it and pile up a vast amount of data concerning it. The data may be absolutely correct, but they do not answer the question: 'What does the code mean?' The modern psychologist has gathered a vast amount of such observable data about man. The key to his code is missing; but we notice that some of the more penetrating scientists are turning to the sacred books of the East to find the missing key.

It is naturally in the field of the abnormal states in man that modern psychology and psychism meet; but in this area the former confines itself mainly to research and experiment connected with such obvious states as dreams, hypnosis, insanity, hysteria, and double personality, leaving untouched a far wider range of unexplained 'powers'.

Further, though psychologists consider that they give a satisfactory explanation for these states which precludes the need to introduce 'occult' factors,

the Theosophical student maintains that their explanations are mere verbal counters behind which the *causes* remain undiscovered. Take, for example, the theory of the 'subconscious' and its interrelations with the conscious mind—a valuable contribution to the science of man. What is this realm of the subconscious if not the astral light? Psychoanalytic case histories reveal what actually are uncannily accurate descriptions of the psychic nature acting in its astral milieu; and it is merely a side-stepping of the issue to cover this entire field by the term 'the subconscious,' defining it as 'the sum total of all psychic processes below the threshold of the conscious mind.'

It is worthy of note that practical psychology brings out a whole new set of problems to be solved which are totally unsuspected in the theoretical systems. In the treatment of abnormal states the practitioner often proves himself much bigger than his theory. This is surely because he brings to bear upon his actual problems his natural love of his fellowmen and his keen desire to bring relief to those who suffer. The spontaneous qualities of his spiritual nature cannot be denied and are bound to exert an influence upon those with whom he labors. On the other hand, he can ill afford to ignore any sources of knowledge in regard to psychic powers, for the simple reason that he is using them himself to some extent. His good intentions will not save his patient from the possibly disastrous effects of a power used in ignorance.

The use of hypnotism in the cure of various afflictions is discussed in a later chapter, but it

may be pointed out here that even where hypnotism is not directly used, there is a large element of *suggestion* (another form of the same power) in the emotional relationship that is often developed between doctor and patient. The negative patient who lays open to his doctor the secrets of his inner self may leave his own will passive for the entrance into the psychic nature of whatever the doctor wished to put there. Leaving aside all cases of unscrupulous behavior on the part of the physician, the negative condition into which the patient may sometimes be thrown is never advisable.

Though no sweeping generalities or dogmatic assertions can be made in regard to the profound problems that the medical psychologist is faced with when he probes into the dark chambers of the unbalanced psyche, we can look forward to the time when the patient will be taught to find and to rely upon the center of strength within himself, the true Spiritual Ego from which, in the end, all power for recovery must spring. All outside help, however salutary, can have a lasting effect only if it becomes an aid to the patient's own latent capacity to correct, from within, his own unbalanced state.

Psychic derangements often accompany and indeed are the cause of various nervous and mental disorders which the medical psychologist treats. For instance, it is well known that certain types of megalomania, or exaggerated egotism, are often accompanied by psychic lesions where the sufferer imagines that he is being led to the performance of great deeds by some angelic guide. He hears ' voices,' he is said to be ' clairvoyant,'

and in touch with ' spiritual ' powers, while all the time his own hallucination is feeding his sense of superiority. It would seem that a knowledge of the true nature of the psyche and the possibility of its ' dislocation ' in the human constitution—one of the commonest evidences of mediumship —would be an enormous help to the psychologist in studying such cases.

While it is freely admitted by many that Western psychology is still in its infancy, in its application to the practical affairs of everyday life, such as education and industry, excellent work is being done. But it is obvious that, whereas ' psychologization ' is freely taught and used, very little is known of the true nature of this psychic power. It has become such a common thing now to believe that it is a good action and a sign of strength of character to force one's own ideas or convictions upon others, that clever methods for doing so are ever on the increase. The very word ' psychologize ' has come to have this popular meaning, though its technical meaning is, of course, ' to analyse psychologically '. If it is argued that success in college or in business depends upon the use of this power, then we can only answer that that in itself is a sad commentary on present-day standards. A real psychologist might analyse this ignoble practice as an attempt, by illicit means, to bring about what the man of high integrity, character and genius, accomplishes through the compelling power of truth and of his innate spiritual strength. True greatness requires no psychological tricks to enhance it.

IV

MEDIUMSHIP AND ITS DANGERS

MEDIUMSHIP of one kind or another is far more common than is generally supposed. It is by no means confined to 'sensitives' in the séance-room. And since a great many types of psychic powers are linked up with this matter, and their origin very little understood, it is worthwhile devoting a chapter to its study.

Speaking in a broad and general sense, we all act as 'mediums' for the transmission of the thoughts and impulses originating in minds other than our own, to a certain extent at least. This is inevitable since we live and move in this world as parts of a great whole. The very law of life is a giving and taking. We are continuously exchanging and interchanging life-atoms—gross, ethereal and spiritual. Ideas spread through the astral ethers unimpeded by time and space. They enter the minds of men, are there clothed in a million forms and are sent forth again to touch new minds, which in turn become new centers of generation. Thought expresses itself in action. Action becomes the stimulus to more thought. The flow is never-ending.

But for all that, we must admit that in our unenlightened attempts to use our divine faculties

of will and imagination, we have transgressed the natural law of giving and taking. The complexities of human relationships offer endless illustrations of this fact. From motives good, bad, or mixed, in a thousand different ways we impose our wills on others; or, we become the instrument for the carrying out of someone else's will, or are moved to action by some other outside agency. Such relationships are not necessarily evil, but when they become habitual, then to the extent that the outside energy controls us, we are actually 'mediums' of one kind or another, using this word in its broadest sense.

In a penetrating article in *The Theosophist* (June, 1884, p. 211), H. P. Blavatsky enumerates various types of such mediums, showing how such types may vary from the most debased to the most sublime:

A person may consciously and voluntarily submit his will to another being and become his slave. This other being may be a human being, and the medium will then be his obedient servant and may be used by him for good or bad purposes. This other 'being' may be an *idea*, such as love, greediness, hate, jealousy, avarice, or some other passion, and the effect on the medium will be proportionate to the strength of the idea and the amount of self-control left in the medium. This 'other being' may be an elementary or an elemental, and the poor medium become an epileptic, a maniac or a criminal. This 'other being' may be the man's own higher principle, whether alone or put into rapport with another ray of the collective universal spiritual principle, and the 'medium' will then be a great genius, a writer, a poet, an artist, a musician, an inventor, and so on. This 'other being' may be

one of those exalted beings, called Mahātmas, and the conscious and voluntary medium will then be called their 'Chela.'

H. P. Blavatsky says further that the 'medium' may or may not be conscious of the source of the influence which moves him. He may be unaware of what the actual being is like whose action is transmitted through him. He may really be getting inspiration from his own Higher Nature and imagine that he is in personal communication with Jesus. Or some adept may influence him to write a great scientific work and the writer imagine that he is in communication with the 'spirit' of Faraday or Francis Bacon. On the other hand, a person may be moved to commit a crime which he considers entirely foreign to his nature, and not be aware of the fact that in this case he is being influenced by an evil denizen of the astral light to whom he has given hospitality.

It can be seen from the above that energies foreign to our own stream of vitality can use us at times in various ways. The playground of their activities is always the region of our psychic nature whether these energies come from 'above' or 'below'. The dangerous and often evil cases of this psychological phenomenon occur when the psychic principle *passively allows itself to be numbed, paralysed, or even ousted* by an intruder from outside. A large proportion of the ordinary mediums are an outstanding example of this sort of usurpation; and a study of what is usually understood as 'mediumship' will serve as a specific illustration of the above general remarks, and provide suggestive

hints as to the enormous possibilities there are for loss of moral stamina as well as of psychic and physical health, where self-control is lacking.

The Ordinary Trance Medium

The term *medium* usually designates one who is abnormally sensitive to impressions from the astral light. Some people are born with marked mediumistic powers. A great many more, having slight tendencies in that direction, have developed these tendencies, ignorantly supposing that a heaven-sent gift has been conferred upon them. The Spiritualists have been largely responsible for this. Since the rise of the Spiritualist movement in the middle of last century, they have never wavered from a sincere belief that by means of 'sensitives' under trance, communications can be made with the spirits of departed loved ones.

Now, no true Occultist would deny that communication of some kind is made. The question is: Communication with what? There are Adepts in occult science who have answered this question. It was they who instructed H. P. Blavatsky in that knowledge which she, with so little recompense, endeavored to share with the Spiritualists. The teachings of these Adepts concerning the nature of Spiritualistic communications bear the force and conviction of first-hand testimony: for that is exactly what it is. They have used neither guesswork, fancy, nor even philosophical speculation. At home in the invisible worlds, they have used the discriminating faculty of their own spiritual clairvoyance to

test and observe what takes place therein. The Theosophical teachings upon these matters represent as much of their findings as they have deemed wise to release for the present generations of men.

First of all, it is impossible to understand this subject of 'communication' without a knowledge of what happens to man's complex nature after death. This is clearly described in another study of this series, to which the reader is referred.*

Barring all frauds, of which, unfortunately, there have been all too many in the history of Spiritualism, we might list types of contact made by the medium as follows:

(a) Elementals or nature spirits. These throng the astral light. Their will, such as it is, is not directed by purposive thought. They are irresponsible and mischievous, and will assume whatever thought-forms are most strongly present in the atmosphere of the séance-room, impressed thereon by the medium or the sitters. Their lively action explains a large proportion of the phenomena of spiritualism.

(b) The 'shells'† of dead men, called *kāma-rūpas* in Theosophical philosophy. These are of astral substance, and like the greater astral light, from which, indeed, they draw their life, they are impregnated with all the passional and lower emotional thoughts and feelings of the human beings who built them up during earth-life.

* No. V, *After Death—What?* by Leoline L. Wright. See Chapter III, 'Why Do We Die?'

† See No. V, *After Death—What?*, Chapter V. 'Can We Communicate with our "Dead"?'

Such kāma-rūpa is no fit body for the real man after death, who makes his escape out of the astral light as quickly as he may, leaving this 'shell' to fade out as it will. It is this 'shell' that is often revitalized in the séance-room, its passions quickened into a false life, and its automatic memory made to rehearse again and again the words and acts of the Ego that once ensouled it.

(c) Akin to these 'shells' are the elementaries. These are the most evil denizens of the astral light. They are also kāma-rūpas of former human beings, but of

grossly materialistic ex-humans whose evil impulses and appetites still inhering in the Kāma-rūpic phantom draw these phantoms to physical spheres congenial to them. They are a real danger to psychical health and sanity, and literally haunt living human beings possessing tendencies akin to their own. They are soulless but still filled with energies of a depraved and ignoble type.

—G DE PURUCKER: *Occult Glossary*, p. 55

H. P. Blavatsky describes such a kāma-rūpa as a vampire 'feeding on the vitality of those who are so anxious for its company.'—*Theosophical Glossary*, p. 172.

(d) Occasionally, under *very* rare and unusual conditions, and when death has just taken place, the true Ego of the deceased may speak through the medium. (This sometimes can happen just before death also) The rare event of such communication just after death, is, in fact, only possible as long as the brain is still functioning. Occultism has always stated what physiologists now admit,

that the process of decease may last several days. When true death has taken place, the Ego slips into unconsciousness from which no medium can recall it.

(e) Certain unusual cases exist where authentic communication has been made with the spirit of a departed friend. This does not mean the *descent* of such spirit. It implies that the medium's Higher Ego is *on the same high plane* as the disembodied spirit and can thus contact it. The medium must be absolutely pure, and then his Higher Ego, untrammelled by an impure psychic vehicle, 'has the opportunity and facility of influencing the passive organs of its entranced physical body, to make them act, speak, and write at its will. The Ego can make it repeat, echo-like, and in the human language, the thoughts and ideas of the disembodied entity, as well as its own.' *

(f) This last case would cover those likewise rare occurrences of contact between the medium and some spiritual being, the contact always made through the intermediary of the medium's own Higher Ego. It should be distinctly understood, however, that in cases (e) and (f) there can be no 'materialization' in the séance-room.

It might be added here that the adept can do this and similar things self-consciously and directed by his will. The unstable condition of the constitution prevalent among mediums is only too often a hindrance to communications of a spiritual nature.

Finally, we should include those numerous instances where the medium is merely reading

* H. P. BLAVATSKY, *The Key to Theosophy* p. 30, orig. ed.

the thoughts in the minds of the sitters. The technical or detailed information thus received has often been adduced by the unsuspecting investigator, as irrefutable proof of true ' spirit ' communication. As a matter of fact, everyone present at a séance is likely to influence the type and extent of the phenomena presented, even though he may be taking no obvious part in the proceedings. It has even been pointed out that a skeptic present will act as a sort of ' freezing ' agent impeding the usual progress of affairs.

Materializations

Having enumerated the types of entities with which communication is made, there still remains to be given an explanation of just what it is that appears in the séance-room. The word ' materialization ' is used in Spiritualism to denote the objective appearance of what purports to be the spirit of the departed one. The striking and sometimes photographic likeness of these shapes constitutes one of the surest proofs to the Spiritualist that it is indeed the dead friend or relative who has ' returned '. Since the actual state of affairs precludes the possibility of the return of the true spirit of the departed from higher realms, what explanation are we to give for this phenomenon?

The Theosophical philosophy explains that the densest astral substance is very near indeed to the most tenuous physical, so that the appearance caught on the photographic plate and seen occasionally with the human eye is that of a coarse grade

of astral substance which has become partially objective through the concurrence of a number of favorable conditions. This should be no more difficult to understand than the various electric phenomena with which we are all familiar. Electricity is forever about us, yet only under certain conditions does its activity become visible. There is also an analogy in the transformations from the invisible to the visible and *vice versa* which take place daily in the test-tube of the biochemist. Or, again, where is our spark of fire before we strike the match that causes it to spring into visibility?

Evidently there is more than one grade of astral substance employed in materializations, and as there are a number of different factors involved, the matter is a very complicated one; but a few general principles can be stated.

Sometimes the apparition, if we may so call it, is formed by the actual astral eidolon or kāma-rūpa of the deceased which naturally bears the likeness of the body that once harbored it.

> Whenever the strong desires of living men and the conditions furnished by the abnormal constitutions of mediums are combined together, these *eidola* are drawn —nay, *pulled* down from their plane on to ours and made objective.—H. P. BLAVATSKY: *Theosophical Glossary*, p. 210

Then there is the ' double ' or astral body which can be projected a short distance from the physical body of the medium. This gathers to itself particles of ethereal substance suspended in the atmosphere

about it, and drawn even from the vital emanations of the sitters. It then takes upon itself whatever thought-forms are most strongly impressed from the minds of those present, more often than not, the likeness of the deceased.

Another and more tangible process is the extrusion of material substance (ectoplasm) from the body of the medium, which substance, being highly plastic molds itself into recognisable forms. In some cases this is like a flat plate upon which a picture is thrown. Obviously these images are not ' spirits ' of any kind; they are merely illusions foisted upon the ignorant sitters by sportive nature-spirits.

In fact, only too often the Spiritualists, and even the more scientific researchers, are subject to the most deceptive illusions because of the activity of the mischievous denizens of the astral light.

Poltergeists

It is to these astral denizens that are to be attributed the crazy moving of furniture, violent breaking of household objects, ringing of bells and other strange noises, as well as the more intelligent ' raps ' answering questions by a sort of code,* which are

* It is a recognised fact that these messages often start out in an incoherent manner, but by mediumistic encouragement a pseudo-personality is gradually developed, representing itself as a spirit known to the sitters. This is explained in Theosophy by the fact that elementals collect the thoughts and images in the minds of those present—which are usually centered upon the departed one—until by degrees an artificial resemblance to the latter's way of thinking and method of expression is built up. If this line of investigation were followed out by psychic researchers, it would lead them to fuller appreciation of the illusory nature of a great number of the phenomena of so-called spirit-return.

known both in the séance-room and out of it. These phenomena are generally classed under the term *poltergeist*, a German word meaning literally 'racketing spirit.' This term is quite accurate, but scientists have adopted it without accepting its significance, since they do not recognise the existence of 'spirits'. When they do not dismiss such occurrences with some mechanical explanation which is often absurd and totally inadequate, they simply describe them as 'phenomena of an unexplained nature and of untraceable origin.'

These phenomena, known in all ages and to all peoples from the most savage tribes to the most highly developed races, are explained in Theosophy in accordance with the principles already set forth in this Study. The factors involved are first, a person of mediumistic tendencies, and second, the inhabitants of the astral light. The 'medium' may be a person temporarily in an unbalanced state perhaps through some nervous malady or nervous shock. Often it is a young girl; and the household may be annoyed for some time by these disturbing happenings without the slightest idea as to who is acting as the 'contact-point' with the astral world. Such a person's constitution acts as an electric wire, so to speak, conducting astral forces onto the physical plane.

There are two general explanations for these disturbances, but, as in all such matters, each case under observation would have to be expertly studied for a complete understanding of all the factors involved. Sometimes it is the medium's own astral limbs, extruded in a sort of dream fashion,

which lift books from a table, knock down pieces of china and so on. More often it is frolicsome nature-spirits which, attracted to psychically sensitive people, are unconsciously used by them to perform these various crazy acts. The medium serves as a sort of inferior type of magician—not evil, but using nature forces as a magician does, though unconsciously and without the technical knowledge of the latter.

A more fully developed medium may attract the decaying kāma-rūpa of some former evil human being, or even a sorcerer who is reaching the last stages of disintegration but who has enough vitality left to permit him to act on the physical plane through the constitution of the medium. Thus the medium who develops his so-called powers by repeated attempts at contact with 'the other side' is in a far worse state than the mere 'sensitive' whose inner faculties may be temporarily out of control.

Mediumship an Undesirable Profession

This whole business of attempting to communicate with the dead has been traditionally considered among all peoples as *necromancy*. Modern Spiritualists are saved from its more evil forms by their good intentions and perhaps even more because of their very ignorance of the occult laws for tampering with the dead which were known to evil sorcerers in the past. It is in their ignorance also that they are violating a law of nature which mercifully puts a veil of oblivion between ourselves

and those who have passed from this plane. Though it is true that present-day attempts to communicate with the departed Ego are not successful, nevertheless the tampering with the being in the kāma-loka delays the process of the Ego's freeing itself from the lower astral realms. W. Q. Judge tells us that the Ego may actually feel a twinge every time his shade is called up in the 'charnel house of a living medium's body.'

But the greatest danger in these practices is to the medium himself. His nature, in the first place, becomes a playground for elemental beings. Normally these beings look upon man as their master and they are quick to recognise and respect those superior moral qualities manifest in the controlled and balanced man. But when man drops to their plane and ignorantly invades their uncanny realm then they become the master. Since they are quite without conscience and moral stamina it is obvious that the very fiber of character of one under their influence is consistently undermined.

The medium also opens the door of his nature to elementaries who are forever seeking an entrance into earth-life in order to satisfy their unfulfilled lusts. In some cases these usurpers are successful in ousting the wavering psyche of the medium from its sheltered seat within the human constitution and then play havoc with his nervous system and mental and even moral stability. Deterioration nearly always results.

Even the 'shells' of averagely good individuals, magnetically drawn to the séance-room, are harmful. Since they are galvanized into a false life by drawing

upon the nervous vitality of the entranced medium, the latter is always left bloodless and exhausted. In fact it is generally recognised that the nervous health of mediums is deplorably bad; and their usual psychic instability is also admitted. Note the accepted definition of a medium quoted in a modern book on Spiritualism:*

> One whose constituent elements—mental, dynamic and material—are capable of being momentarily decentralized. The innate tendency to dissociation in these peculiar constitutions is increased by the practice of mediumship, *which tends to render the primarily abnormal state more and more easy and normal*—a fact that should cause one to pause before embarking on the career.

H. P. Blavatsky's emphatic warnings against the cultivation of mediumistic powers, as well as the words of other Theosophical teachers, take on added force when one reviews the fate of the many human wrecks that modern Spiritualism has left in its train.

Mediator versus Medium

Fortunately this unlovely subject has another side to it—the true occult science of which mediumship is but a counterfeit. In the highly trained human being, the psychic nature can be so absolutely under control, so free from the pull downwards towards things of matter, so pellucid, that it can act as an intermediary for the transmission of

* *A Cavalcade of the Supernatural*, by H. H. U. Cross, PH. D., p. 137.

the lofty energies of the Spiritual Ego without distortion or misrepresentation.

The technical word to describe such an intermediary is *Mediator.* The character of a mediator is the antithesis of that of the medium. The former is highly spiritual, with a forceful personality often, and a firmness of will which could in no way be affected or turned aside by beings in the lower astral light. It is said, in fact, that the evil denizens of the astral currents surrounding our earth could not endure to be near one who radiated such spiritual vitality. Myths and stories of every land telling of those highly developed beings who seem to walk in the light and radiate it about them, and from whom 'devils' and 'demons' flee, have their originals in actual individuals. If we do not see many such in our day, we may well believe it is because we have not created an atmosphere congenial to their exalted natures.*

A mediator is also able on occasion to step aside, so to speak, with full consciousness, in order to allow his brain and body to be used by one even greater than himself. This 'stepping aside' in no way resembles the disjunction or dislodging of the intermediate nature which takes place in the case of the hapless and helpless medium, nor has it anything to do with spiritualism or spiritualistic séances. It is done with the full intelligence and cooperation of the individual and for a divinely compassionate purpose. There is a great mystery connected with this which in published writings can only be hinted at; but those who are at all familiar with the

* See *Isis Unveiled,* I, Ch. XIII.

life-story of H. P. Blavatsky will know something of how she, as the Messenger of the Brotherhood of Compassion, offered herself as their mouth-piece.

There is value to the ordinary man and woman in this teaching of the infilling of the nature with the inspiration of the Higher Self. By studying the principles of both mediumship and mediatorship, we can learn in our every act to avoid the former while cultivating the latter state. A positive alert attitude to the duties that life brings us, a practice of the power of concentration, and an attempt to lift even the commonplaces of our existence to a plane where they can be illumined by the light of our own spiritual nature, are the first steps in a training which must extend over many lifetimes before we reach the status of the mediator.

There is in very fact, wondrous mystery as it is, a continuous and unceasing effort of the inner god to lean downwards towards us, so to speak, in order to raise its "lower self," the human individual, up to higher planes towards a final consummation of self-conscious unity with itself. When the inner god thus leans from its heights and touches its lower brother-mind, there then instantaneously passes from the god a spiritual-electric fire into the being of the one thus divinely touched.—G. DE PURUCKER, *The Esoteric Tradition*, II, 984-5.

There is no normal human being who cannot learn to become such a mediator for the transmission of this "spiritual-electric fire" from the god within his own being.

V

HYPNOTISM

CLOSELY associated with the general topic of mediumship is that of hypnotism, since the subject of the hypnotizer's experiments becomes in a very real sense a medium: his will is temporarily paralysed and often permanently weakened, and his psychic nature becomes a passive receiver of the foreign will-force it is subjected to.

H. P. Blavatsky speaks of Hypnotism as the "illegitimate son of Mesmerism." This indicates that a distinction is actually to be made between the two, though in early Theosophical literature the terms are sometimes used interchangeably.

Anton Mesmer reintroduced to the western world, in the latter part of the eighteenth century, a knowledge of the healing power of magnets. He showed that certain diseases could be treated effectively by stroking the afflicted parts with magnets of various kinds. He soon realized that the magnetic rods with which his first experiments were made merely served as conductors for an etheric fluid emanating from his own person; and he then re-enunciated the truth that the human body itself is a magnet and that some people have the ability to use this magnetic power from themselves without the aid of metals. It is because of

its presence in the physical body that the force became known as "animal" magnetism for want of a more truly scientific term.

This magnetism is, as a matter of fact, as Mesmer was well aware, a quality pervading the whole universe, man merely sharing in it because he is built out of the very substance of the universe. In man it manifests as an invisible fluid that can be induced to flow by means of the will from one individual to another. H. P. Blavatsky describes it thus:

> Occultism calls the force transmitted, the "auric *fluid*," to distinguish it from the "auric *light*"; the "fluid" being a correlation of *atoms* on a higher plane, and a descent to this lower one, in the shape of impalpable and invisible plastic Substances, generated and directed by the potential Will; . . .
>
> —*Studies in Occultism*, II.

This "correlation of atoms" spoken of is but one aspect of the general law, already stated, that we are all continuously pouring forth streams of life-atoms on all planes of our being. This outflow is very weak in some individuals, very strong in others, depending upon the general vitality of the individual, which vitality is in itself determined by the habitual trends of the Ego through many lives, in which it has been building and perfecting for itself outer and inner bodies for its means of expression in earth-life.

The magnetic fluid is not in itself a spiritual thing, and it need not necessarily be the possession only of those who are spiritually developed. It

might be said that the force *per se* is colorless, receiving its healthy or unhealthy stamp from the operator. All types of magnetic healers of today use this force and whether they understand its rationale or not, does not affect in any way the quality of the emanation. They give to the patient of their own vitality, and, if their own vital stream is healthy, not only on the physical but on the psychic plane (this latter being the more important) then real cures can be made by means of this "auric fluid." But it is a question how many would-be healers have an absolutely pure heredity; and there is always some risk in attempted cures of this kind because where there are any physical weaknesses in the practitioner, even though they be only in germ, these may be transplanted into the patient's life-stream, and a worse disease takes root in the adopted system than the one that is being cured.

Painstaking and conscientious investigation over long periods of time, and a study of many types of cases, would have to be undertaken to provide "convincing" scientific proof of this occult truth; and even such examinations would be incomplete since the present-day scientist does not consider the thread of continuous life carrying along from incarnation to incarnation, following the longer cycles of cause and effect.

Anton Mesmer was, of course, an adept in the art of magnetic healing. As one of the cyclical envoys from the Brotherhood of Compassion he was authorized to teach the real nature of this power and its use in healing. His cures were effected always by direction of his will and in full

understanding of the polarity of the physical body in its relation to the great magnet, the universe. His knowledge, in fact, was much vaster than is generally supposed. He founded in 1783 the " Order of Universal Harmony " where it is generally supposed only animal magnetism was taught; but in reality he taught the principles and methods used in the ancient Temples of Healing, called in Greece the Temples of Aesculapius. (See H.P. Blavatsky: *The Theosophical Glossary*)

There has always been known to the few " enlightened ones " a complete occult system of healing; sometimes it has been generally recognized for the actual fact that it is, and sometimes it has been scoffed at and called superstition or fraud, as was the case with Mesmer's work of nearly two centuries ago. In many lands this art, or true science, was carried on under the aegis of the Mystery Schools where proper supervision and training was possible; where the physicians were adepts in the mysteries of man's inner nature as well as of his physical body, and where the possibility of the art's being used for evil purposes was unthinkable.

Today there is no such occult school for training in this art, whose modern presentation, the pseudo-science known as Hypnotism, denies the very source from which it sprang. This modern counterfeit is classed by all occultists as a species of the Black Art—Sorcery; unconscious in many cases, to be sure, but evil nonetheless because it violates a fundamental law and right of our human nature; that each man shall be his own ruler in his inner kingdom, with the right of choice as to what guests

he shall entertain therein, and the right to direct his own development by discovering for himself and making use of the exhaustless treasures that his inner kingdom contains.

Hypnotism comes from a Greek root, *hypnos*, meaning "sleep"; and the practice is so named because the state brought about in the subject of the experiment resembles an artificially induced somnambulism. Such a state is produced when the mesmeric fluid from the operator, creeping over the whole body of the subject, changes the polarity of the entire cell structure. When this process is complete the astral man is partially dissociated from the physical and at the same time a disjunction occurs between the psyche and its astral instrument. In this unnatural and defenseless condition, the subject is left will-less, and by means of impressing pictures upon the astral double (a process called "suggestion"), the operator can make him perform automatically whatever he wills that he shall do, since the physical body, driven by the will-force from without, merely produces the motion-patterns indicated in the astral double.

In this process the nervous system, the link between the physical and astral bodies, is anesthetized: a state that in itself has questionable after-effects, since it is likely to cause or aggravate the nervous unbalance and sensitiveness so characteristic of all types of mediums.

Further, when the hypnotizer dominates the will of another so that it becomes inactive, what actually happens is that he synchronizes the rate

of vibration of his will and that of his subject. H. P. Blavatsky thus describes the process:

> . . . it is the Will of the operator radiating through his eye that produces the required unison between his will and the will of the person operated upon. For, out of two objects attuned in unison—as two chords, for instance—one will always be weaker than the other, and thus [the stronger] have mastery over the other and even the potentiality of destroying its weaker " co-respondent."
>
> —*Studies in Occultism*, II.

In these words lies the key to a scientific explanation of the deterioration of the force of will in the victim of such practices. Even in cases where experimentation is well-meaning, once the controlling power is withdrawn, as for instance at the death of the hypnotizer, the subject finds himself stranded, deprived both of the artificial aid and of his self-generated will. It is for this reason that the use of hypnotism for the cure of bad habits or mental ills, cannot be approved by the Theosophist. To be able temporarily to supply an alien psychic force for making an artificial adjustment, is merely delaying the process that finally has to take place. Cures made in this way are at best temporary, and the time will come when the steps of the sufferer will have to be retraced and the enfeebled psychic nature build as best it may a secure stronghold within the outer vehicle.

In all cases of hypnotic subjugation, the contact between hypnotist and patient establishes a *rapport* which reacts on both. The karma of the two

becomes inextricably woven, so that the operator becomes largely karmically responsible for anything the other may do in his unconscious state, or even afterwards due to the effect of post-hypnotic suggestion. Moreover, the hypnotizer is unable to make the line of demarcation between the purely physiological results of his efforts and the psychic results, and in his ignorance may bring on subtle reactions which even he had no intention of inducing and over which he has no control. It is even said that there is the possibility of a psychic backwash too strong for the practitioner himself to withstand, since the channels of communication are open in both directions, and the very things that he is combating may find lodgment in his own nature.

Quite aside from the use of this power for cures of one kind or another, which are, in these days, better regulated than formerly, there is much illicit use of the power to amuse the wonder-seekers. This is a disgrace to our civilization and can only be excused on the grounds of the utter ignorance of most performers and of those who allow themselves to be used for such public exhibitions. Such spectacles accustom the unthinking to imagine that the whole thing is a sport and nothing more; while they act as a constant suggestion to evil-minded men to develop the power for their own diabolic purposes. The last mentioned use of the power is the most insidious, since crimes committed in this way are untraceable. Mr. Judge speaks of this as one of the most serious aspects of our present development, since the power is likely to increase

in the coming generations rather than decrease, and the ethical development of the race does not appear to be keeping pace.

Self-Hypnotization

Under this heading may be classed a great many abnormal states, which might even include the psychological case in which the self-deluded individual has given over all the energies of his being to some fixed idea that he has built up in his consciousness. The idea may have no basis in actual reality, but it can become of such absorbing reality to the unfortunate person that he may entirely lose his sense of proportion and finally become unfit to continue life among normal people. Mental unbalance of this sort often starts by the fostering of some imaginary grievance which, once it receives lodgment in the mind, finds little difficulty in waxing strong and finally dominating its victim.

However, confining ourselves to those cases which rightly come under the study of psychic powers, and in which there are definite physiological as well as psychological reactions, we might enumerate the following:

(a) Those who induce "artificial somnambulism" without the aid of an outside operator, by various mechanical means such as gazing at a bright object.

(b) The religious ecstatics who can reproduce upon their own bodies the wounds as pictured on the body of Jesus by the concentrated visualizing of such unpleasant pictures until the astral disfiguration affects the physical flesh.

(c) Those who practise certain lower forms of Yoga, hoping by psycho-physiological means to rise superior over the claims of body and mind.

(d) Those who, in their misguided enthusiasm, try to heal the ills of the body by denying the existence of their troubles.

In all these cases imagination and will are the two moving powers. For man is a tremendous dynamo of energy—a creator who makes his creations out of thought driven by will. But thought can either build or destroy, and whether he is acting upon his own nature or that of another, it behooves him to know something about the tools with which he works, otherwise he may find himself well on the road to destroying—himself.

In our normal use of thought directed by will we are using a psychic power. This is legitimate; but the cases enumerated above, instance the unwise use of such power. To discuss briefly but one example, that of curing disease by forcible efforts of the self-centered will: In the ancient schools it was understood that all sickness originates with the thinking self, which has the power of impressing, first upon the astral body, and through it on the physical, the stamp of its character. Thought at the present stage of our development is largely governed by emotion, and it is actually the potent interaction of these two that changes our bodies and accounts for our states of health and disease. The disease itself is only a symptom of an inner state, or of a state held at some time in the past by the ego, perhaps several incarnations ago. Disease might, in fact, be described as " a state of

mind and emotion in the last stages of working itself out of the human constitution through the physical body." For nature works normally from within outward, and the appearance of a disease is a testimony to her thorough and efficient methods.

No adept in the art of healing will therefore do anything that will dam back the disease. He would consider it merely doing away with the symptoms and sending the seeds of the trouble back to its psychic source. To deny with concentrated will the existence of an obvious ill is a form of this damming back, or sending back, process, which, apparently so effective sometimes, is really most ineffective since it is an interference with a natural process, which will at a later date have to be repeated.

This does not mean that mind plays no part in healing. Just the contrary. Since mind caused the disease, mind can also cause eventual health by creating a generating center of mental health within. But ills perhaps long ago established, are better left to the wise care of a good physician who aids nature in carrying them out of the system; aided also, hopefully, by the patient himself by a cheerful attitude of mind based on a philosophical outlook towards the trouble.

Psychologization in General

Under the general term Hypnotism are included all forms of fascination, suggestion, glamour, spell-binding, and so on, all of which might accurately be grouped under the general heading of

"Psychologization," a tampering with the psychic nature of other individuals. Probably a record of the former lives of many unfortunate inmates of our mental hospitals as well as our prisons would show that there had been subjection at one time or another to hypnotic influence.

In all cases of hypnosis the confidence and good will of the patient are necessary for complete success, while prejudice against the practice may render one much less amenable to suggestion and even entirely immune. Similarly in all forms of psychologization an intelligent understanding of the danger of the process, and a healthy and positive disapproval of any form of it are an excellent protection. And it is worth pondering upon the thought that as in all forms of mediumship, each person is vulnerable to such domination at those points where his nature is weakest.

As H. P. Blavatsky says:

> Every man has his little "weaknesses," and every man has his little "mediumship"; that is to say, some vulnerable point, by which he may be taken unaware.—*Collected Writings of H. P. Blavatsky*, pp. 223-27, "Are Chelas 'Mediums'?"

If a man allows fear to rule his life, then it is this aura of fear about him that will invite some form of subtle suggestion. Or sloth and indifference may throw him off his guard. Living as we do amid a constant subtle interplay of forces, bathed as we are at all times by the thought-laden astral currents, it is never wise to imagine our fortress

impregnable unless we can keep the connexion with our spiritual inner center unbroken.

This state of inner stability is the truly *human* condition. When we drop below this by allowing any vagrant force to sweep us off our feet, we have fallen somewhat below the human standard. We can be said to be for the time sub-human. The inanities and even atrocities committed by groups of people under the power of what is called "mob-psychology" show to what extent otherwise quite decent people can forego their true humanity and become irresponsible "elementals" automatically driven by some outside Will or Idea.

Will-Prayer

There is one other type of psychic power which should receive mention, though it does not strictly belong under the subject of Hypnotism. This power is used in various ways which might all be classed under what H. P. Blavatsky calls Will-Prayer.

The number of groups and individuals in the West who use some form of Will-Prayer is growing rapidly. They have discovered, indeed, an occult secret: "the *mysterious power of thought* which enables it to produce external, perceptible, phenomenal results by its own inherent energy." (*The Secret Doctrine*, II, 173)

Since Man is a Thinker, he is a Creator, and if his will is strong enough and one-pointed enough he can make of an Idea a *fact*. But when this divine gift is used, as only too often it is, to satisfy selfish personal wishes, remove hardships and trials,

and in general do away with the wholesome disciplines which his life provides, he transforms the spiritual will into the psychic. This is a dangerous practice which can become the first step along the path of moral degeneration. One's "willing" for this or for that may "work"; but the many instances recorded of results coming about in unexpected ways, or at times when the objects are no longer desired, should act as a deterrent to those who are tempted to dabble with occult powers.

It should be noted, however, that one of man's latent spiritual powers is that of *kriyāśakti*. When highly developed this gives the adept power to project his thought into materialization. H. P. Blavatsky calls it one of the seven forces of Nature.

A study of the legitimate uses of thought and will is essential to all students of life. Intelligent discrimination must be used, however, if one would discern the false from the true.*

* For further study of this important subject see *The Key to Theosophy*, pp. 67-8, orig. ed.

VI

CLAIRVOYANCE AND OTHER PSYCHIC POWERS

CLAIRVOYANCE, clairaudience, telepathy, psychometry and the like powers, may or may not be connected with the phenomena of spiritualistic mediumship. Certain phases of these powers are common to the medium under trance, but many clairvoyants, psychometrists, etc., have no connexion whatsoever with the spiritualistic séance.

The possession of these faculties, mentioned above, does not indicate an unusual degree of spiritual development, nor is their manifestation dependent upon purity and unselfishness of character. They are merely evidences that one or more of the astral senses are partially able to act independent of their physical counterparts.

CLAIRVOYANCE AND CLAIRAUDIENCE

The word "clairvoyance" means "clear-seeing," but this is exactly what it is not as this psychic power is known today, since its outstanding characteristic is unreliability. There are, as said, many grades of astral substance, each of which is familiar to a certain type of "seer," but as a rule it is the lower regions of the astral light that the clairvoyant

contacts, a realm where all is a welter of confusion. Even here their vision is limited, they see only into one or more sub-planes, and their pictures are therefore partial and scrappy.

Through octave after octave of vibrations the effect of every thought or act on our plane makes its own particular impression on inner planes, each and all known to the occultist. Each such impression represents but one phase of the imperishable record. The trained seer must combine all of these " aspects " in order to read the true picture. W. Q. Judge in his article " Shall We Teach Clairvoyance?" describes how even in so simple an act as a person's moving from one chair to another in a room, all the centers of force in his being come into play and each one makes its own and peculiar effect on the astral substance, and he goes on to say that:

> At once the motion made and thoughts aroused elicit their own sound, color, motion in ether, amount of etheric light, symbolic picture, disturbance of elemental forces, and so on through the great catalogue. Did one but wink his eye, the same effects follow in due order. And the seer can perceive but that which attunes itself to his own development and personal peculiarities, all limited in force and degree.—*The Path*, V.

Every reading made by the seer is modified, if not markedly colored, by his own powers of interpretation, partly governed by his degree of technical knowledge concerning the character of the various sub-planes of the astral light, and partly by his mental and intuitional development. In fact his

whole hereditary and evolutionary background affects the nature of his interpretation.

There is also a distinction to be made between actual astral records of people and events either of the past, present or future, and mere thought-forms relating to such people and events projected from the minds of individuals. Suppose, for instance, one approaches a " fortune-teller " for the purpose of finding out whether some project will turn out to one's liking. There are several possibilities of error in the answer, aside from the limitations already mentioned. There hangs around every man in his own astral atmosphere, sometimes called his aura, a perfect phantasmagoria of images that he weaves out of the stuff of his own thinking self. Now if our querent has built up, as he undoubtedly has, a thought-picture of what he hopes will happen, the seer may mistake this for a foreshadowing of the future outcome. Or the querent's mind may be just freshly impressed by thoughts from another dominant mind. This impression will then stand out most clearly and prove a false indication for the undiscriminating seer. Or there may be spontaneous and quite unconscious feelings of either sympathy or antipathy between the two, and this in itself will color the reply.

Further, the relation of pictures one with another is not clear in the astral light. There is often a reversal of sequence or conditions: the future may appear as the past, summer as winter, results look like causes, and so on. Numbers also are said to appear in reverse, as for instance 321 may be transformed into 123.

Such instances of the unreliability of most clairvoyant readings could be added to almost indefinitely. Conflicting reports from a number of clairvoyants about some event of nation-wide interest bear out the emphatic statements made by occultists as to the uncertain character of all such sources of knowledge. And mention might also be made of the strong temptation to deception and fraud risked by those professed psychics whose rather doubtful powers are not always functioning.

Besides this matter of unreliability, which often may lead others astray, there are the more serious dangers to the clairvoyant himself. It is significant that a large majority of clairvoyants suffer from nervous and other physical disorders, and from mental instability, and that their degree of sensitivity often increases proportionally to their ill-health.

Further, the effect of such constant centering of attention on this subtle sense-perception brings on a gradual atrophy of the thinking and reasoning faculty. The clairvoyant, also, may not be able to stop the power at will, and the images that float before his inner eye may torment and perplex until sanity itself is threatened. When we are so little able as yet to stand firm against the throng of subtle suggestions that assault the fortress of our psychic nature through the avenues of our five physical senses, it would seem to be rashness in the extreme to wish to be introduced to a whole new set of senses, far more complicated and bewildering in action. And to advise another to try to develop clairvoyant powers is a responsibility no one would care to undertake once he knew all that it entails.

The following words from W. Q. Judge in the same article are emphatic and unmistakable in their import:

But what shall theosophists do? Stop all attempts at clairvoyance. And why? Because it leads them slowly but surely—almost beyond recall—into an interior and exterior passive state where the will is gradually overpowered and they are at last in the power of the demons who lurk around the threshold of our consciousness. Above all, follow no advice to "sit for development". Madness lies that way. The feathery touches which come upon the skin while trying these experiments are said by mediums to be the gentle touches of the "spirits". But they are not. They are caused by the ethereal fluids from within us making their way out through the skin and thus producing the illusion of a touch. When enough has gone out, then the victim is getting gradually negative, the future prey for spooks and will-o'-the-wisp images.

"But *what*," they say, "shall we pursue and study?" Study the philosophy of life, leave the decorations that line the road of spiritual development for future lives, and—practise altruism.

Clairaudience is but another form of the same psychic power as clairvoyance and may be just as open to error. Sound, like light, leaves its impressions upon the tenacious substance of the astral light. This may be difficult to understand at first, but an analogous phenomenon is found in the simple experiment of the physics laboratory where sand will take on geometrical patterns when submitted to the vibrations of a musical instrument. The phonograph record still better illustrates this point.

The two powers are sometimes hardly distinguishable, both astral senses apparently functioning together. And whether of the ear or of the eye the "image" may sometimes seem to be objective because the astral sense organ, having received its vibratory message from the ether, sends it on to the brain which then excites the physical organ of sight or sound.

Telepathy

Telepathy or thought-transference, also called E. S. P. (extra-sensory perception), is the faculty of perceiving thought-pictures sent out by another mind. Involuntary telepathy is very common indeed, especially where there exists a bond of sympathy. Almost everyone has had the experience of having letters cross, one being obviously the reply to the other; or that a friend at a distance is aware of something going on in one's own mind without any written word. There is nothing abnormal or "magical" about this, since thought is known to the occultist to be vibratory, and where two minds are in sympathy there is similarity of vibration transmitted from one mind to the other along the invisible astral medium.

Voluntary telepathy requires not only a perfect *rapport* between two individuals, but also an intense concentration of thought directed by the will; but the development of the power in ordinary persons would be exceedingly difficult and probably dangerous in any case. As a race we have not as yet the

ethical stamina that would prove us worthy to possess a power allowing us, under a thousand temptations, to pick the thoughts out of another's mind and pry into the inner recesses of his consciousness.

The present rather widespread experiments in telepathy, in order to discover whether there does exist a sixth sense in man, an extra-sensory perception, are bound to be very incomplete in their results, because the experimenters are working with the mysteries of elusive consciousness which will not be confined within the limits of the laboratory. It is like trying to draw permanent lines with a stick in a body of water. Yet their efforts are interesting since they may lead to the opening of a door into a realm whose existence scientists have consistently denied.

The researches of Dr. J. B. Rhine of Duke University are now well-known. Since these are carried out on a strictly scientific basis they do much toward reassuring the scientific world of the *bona fides* of this occult power.

There is a higher form of telepathy, if one may so call it, in which we all may partake. H. P. Blavatsky speaks of that great ocean of supernal Ideas in which our globe exists. To this are attracted those great minds of the human race whose quality of thought is on a similar high plane. These giant minds become the channels by which these sublime Ideas are clothed in human language to quicken the spiritual intuitions of the race. This inner world of thought has no limiting frontiers. We keep ourselves out.

Crystal-Gazing

This rather specific term may serve to describe one type of astral visioning. It is the practice of looking into a crystal, a polished mirror, or some such object with the ability to see therein events taking place at a distance, or foreshadowings of the future. Examination shows that there are too many cases of successful divination to class this whole matter under that of hallucination or trickery. Yet as with other occult matters, the subject has not been studied seriously by scientific investigators because of materialistic prejudice which would make the researcher lose caste in scientific circles. For too long the matter has been associated with superstition and the tricks of paid professionals. The inability of the seer to be consistently successful, or to explain causes of failure, has also helped to throw the whole matter into disfavor.

Theosophy explains that certain bright and polished objects more readily than other things collect or concentrate a portion of the astral light about themselves, where pictures are thus made visible to one who has a certain amount of clairvoyant perception. Such objects are really merely an aid to the natural clairvoyant. Records of many peoples show a wide variety of such objects used in different ages and countries, such as a pool of ink in the hand, water in a vessel, a sword blade, and so on.

Psychometry

This is the faculty of reading astral impressions and pictures that cluster around inanimate as well

as animate objects. Such pictures the psychometrist can "see" when he comes into physical contact with the object to be studied. The sensations received are not only those of sight. Sounds can be heard, odors smelt, or sensations of heat and cold, dryness and moisture felt.

Thus a manuscript, painting, article of clothing or jewelry—no matter how ancient—conveys to the sensitive, a vivid picture of the writer, painter, or wearer even; though he lived in the days of Ptolemy or Enoch. Nay, more; a fragment of an ancient building will recall its history and even the scenes which transpired within or about it. A bit of ore will carry the soul-vision back to the time when it was in process of formation.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY, *Isis Unveiled*, I, 182.

This power is fairly common in a mild degree. In fact all people who are at all sensitive to the unpleasant or perhaps pleasant atmosphere hanging around old houses, books, furniture and the like, are exhibiting a slight and unconscious use of the power; for it is obvious that that unseen something they sense, adheres rather in the astral body of the object than in the physical shell.

Psychometry may be considered a relatively safe door into the inner world for the scientists. The thousands of experiments that have been made along this line are much more satisfactory and much less subject to fraud than anything else of a psychic nature. H. P. Blavatsky suggests that the faculty was extensively used in the ancient world, and quotes a modern investigator who believes that the profound knowledge of the Chalden astrologers

was gained rather through clairvoyant reading of certain meteoric stones than by the use of astronomical instruments.*

Automatic Writing

Automatic Writing, besides being one of the phenomena of spiritualism, is also at the present time cultivated by an ever increasing number of people whose purposes in so doing are probably varied. Some enthusiasts seriously believe that they can train themselves to be guided in the composition of marvellous works of literature, or become the channels for revelations of truth from "on high." But most results that have been studied, while sometimes containing bits of lofty thought, are characterized by two things: (a) inequality of style to a marked degree, and, (b) lack of any coherent thread of thought. The mass of twaddle put out in this way is conspicuous. Even the best class of this kind of writing never contains any *new* contribution to the body of spiritual ideas already found in the great literatures of the world.

In India, where the mysteries of the psychic nature have been studied for many ages, such type of automatic writing has always been ascribed to *bhūtas*, astral remnants of former human beings. And the practice has always been warned against, since it leaves one passive to whatever astral entities may find an affinity in one's psychic make-up.

* See *Isis Unveiled*, I, 331-2.

There is, however, another type of automatic writing which is described by G. de Purucker as follows:

This kind is wholesome, good, and proper to cultivate *if you have a wise and reliable Teacher.* Otherwise you will almost inevitably slip on the path. This other kind of automatic writing can occur when the higher part of the human constitution becomes the controlling factor for an hour or two or three mayhap. The human being then is no longer conscious of his physical personality at all; he has transcended that; he has raised himself, has become for the time being almost at one with the god within, and in these circumstances his hand writes what may actually be a very message from his own spiritual nature.

But alas! in the present state of human evolution, none can do this without initiation, without training, without a Teacher.

—*Questions We All Ask,* Series II, No. IV.

To establish contact with the spiritual source of one's own being requires not only technical training, but a prepared vehicle as well. It was through such training and preparation that H. P. Blavatsky was able to become the channel for the writing of large portions of her books by her own Teachers. She was able at any moment to receive their "call to attention"; and many hints that she herself has given in her writings show that this was no light accomplishment.

There is at the present time a mushrooming of psychic practices, alarming and even dangerous.

The attempt in this study is to give the necessary metaphysical explanation underlying general types of psychic powers as a starting point for wise study and also as a warning of possible dangers.

It would not be profitable to dwell further on the various types of abnormal development as exhibited in the West; nor need the numerous other psychic powers known only to the East concern us here. Enough has been said to show how misleading is the glamour that hangs about these subjects, a glamour that we could dispel if we knew more about the genuine spiritual powers of which these are at best but a poor reflexion.

For instance, it is undoubtedly the element of prophecy that makes clairvoyance so fascinating to many people. To be able to cheat time, so to speak, becomes almost a passion with some. Yet such attempts to glimpse into the future, when successful bring dissatisfaction, unrest, a centering of attention upon oneself, and a general loss of equilibrium; when unsuccessful, they are futile indeed.

The true clairvoyant power, on the other hand, which takes its beginnings in unselfish love, brings with it no such unhappy results. It is a power used at will by the master of life; in us it feebly manifests as flashes of intuitions, hunches, warnings in dreams, and the like.

Even such qualities as discrimination and sound judgment, natural attributes of the well-developed individual, indicate that normal evolutionary growth leads us *sanely*, even if imperceptibly, towards the acquiring of clairvoyant powers. Discrimination is essentially a quality derived from our

Buddhic principle, and wherever we see someone who knows "instinctively" as we say, what to do in a crisis, when to act and when to refrain from action, who can make swift decisions (perhaps on momentous questions) that contain no flaw of judgment, who has a balanced sense of values—such a person we may know is giving exercise to the clairvoyant power of "seeing straight." The highly specialized powers of the adept must always rest on such secure foundations of character. They are the normal higher faculties of man, developed, refined and expanded to a universal scope.

One often comes upon the phrase, "The Eye of Śiva" or "The Third Eye," in Theosophical literature. This refers to the inner spiritual eye of the seer; but "the faculty which manifests through it is not clairvoyance as ordinarily understood, i.e., the power of seeing at a distance, but rather the faculty of spiritual intuition, through which direct and certain knowledge is obtainable."*

There was a time in the history of man's evolution, say the ancient records,† when the race possessed an actual physical organ known as the Third Eye which finally became atrophied as spirituality disappeared and materiality increased. This was the organ of spiritual clairvoyance, now represented in the skull by the mysterious pineal gland which remains as a witness to the fact that there exists this sleeping power within us.

The disappearance of the Third Eye took place when man's physical development dominated the

* *The Secret Doctrine*, I, 46, footnote.
† See *The Secret Doctrine*, II, 294-302.

scene. But that racial cycle of growth has now passed its lowest point, and it is again time for our spiritual faculties, so long recessive, to find expression through our progressively refining inner and outer bodies. Thus true clairvoyance is not something foreign to the human make-up. To the extent that we can tranquilize and purify our psychic nature we shall again possess that direct perception of Reality which belongs to us by right of our essential spiritual nature. But possession is not enough. Spiritual intuition, the true clairvoyance, does not become *our* strength and *our* knowledge until we learn how to use it.

VII

THE THEOSOPHICAL OBJECTIVE

WHEN the Theosophical Society was founded in 1875, those who were attracted to this "new" and original organization naturally interpreted its objectives in the light of their own understanding and according to their degree of enlightenment. If, as they understood, there existed a great Brotherhood of exalted Men who possessed amazing power over the forces of man and nature, and who were guardians of a great treasury of knowledge accumulated through the ages, then here was the opportunity of a lifetime to receive development along "occult" lines and learn those secrets that confer knowledge and power upon him who can master them.

It was vague in the minds of many as to exactly what sort of training and instruction they were seeking and exactly what were the results they expected to arrive at. To some it was psychism that fascinated. And these were disappointed when they found that no promises were made to teach methods for roaming about in the astral body at will, reading astral records, or communicating with "spirits."

Others, interested in "magic" and the occult arts, looked for instruction in formulas and spells

and rites, in "correspondences" and the secret properties of metals, colors, numbers and the like.

Others aspired rather higher. They wished to acquire the powers of the spirit, those qualities that make one truly holy and wise; and they imagined that their eagerness to be put under training and their high enthusiasm were sufficient guarantee of success.

The Theosophical philosophy has an answer for each of these three classes of power-seekers, whose like can be found today, as always. The dangers of psychism have already been discussed at length in these pages. No Theosophical Teacher, however, condemns psychic powers *per se*.

When a man has allied himself consciously with the god within him, with the real source of everything that he is, then these psychical powers and faculties so-called develop and unfold as naturally as the unfolding of the petals of a flower, and the use of these psychical faculties and powers then becomes not only legitimate and proper, but necessary. But to cultivate these psychical things before you have mastered the merest elements of self-knowledge, of selfhood, before you know who you are or before you have found yourself, makes you to be as much without guides as is a bit of drifting flotsam on the ocean of life; —G. PURUCKER, *Questions We All Ask*, Series II, No. v.

To those interested in the occult arts, the following words of H. P. Blavatsky are a fitting answer:

Occultism is not magic. It is *comparatively* easy to learn the trick of spells and the methods of using the subtler, but still material, forces of physical nature; the powers of the animal soul in man are soon awakened;

the forces which his love, his hate, his passion, can call into operation, are readily developed. But this is Black Magic—*Sorcery*.

— *Studies in Occultism*

And again:

Real *divine* theurgy requires an almost superhuman purity and holiness of life; otherwise it degenerates into mediumship or black magic.

— *The Key to Theosophy*, p. 3, footnote

A distinction is made in Theosophy between Occultism and the Occult Arts. Occultism is Ātma-Vidyā, which means literally "Knowledge of the Self." This knowledge is the supreme aim of the true aspirant to wisdom because he is taught that *the universe is within himself*, and that the farther "inward" he goes the more all-embracing his consciousness becomes. This is a mystical saying which will not yield up its secret meaning to the coldly critical mind of the pure materialist.

The occult arts, on the other hand, constitute a group of *Sciences*—however little recognized today; among which are included Occult Physiology, Astrology, Alchemy and Chiromancy. They are based on exact knowledge and are known to the Great Brotherhood of Adepts by natural right. But the high spiritual stature of these Sages was never achieved by seeking to attain this knowledge and power for its own sake.

Ātma-Vidyā, says H. P. Blavatsky, sets small store by them.

It includes them all, and may even use them occasionally, but it does so after purifying them of their

dross, for beneficent purposes, and taking care to deprive them of every element of selfish motive.

—*Studies in Occultism*, I

To those who aspire to attain the powers of the spirit, the answer always comes: *Discipline first.*

Siddhis (or the Arhat* powers) are only for those who are able to "lead the life," to comply with the terrible sacrifices required for such a training, and to comply with them *to the very letter.*

—*Op. cit.*, I

There have been those who have complained at this attitude of reserve on the part of Theosophical Teachers, in giving out certain knowledge, and have attributed it to unworthy motives of one kind or another—reflected, indeed, from their own distorted consciousness. Study of the philosophy, however, soon uncovers the wise reason for this reticence. Man as he is at present is comparatively well protected against his own follies and imperfections. His very incapacity shields him. But Knowledge is power, and power without absolute purity and *self*-control spells sorcery and finally utter self-destruction. Knowledge also brings responsibility; and whatever evil effects arise from one's wielding of forbidden power, affecting others as well as oneself, have to be met and answered for by the unfortunate offender of the cosmic law.

No true Teacher would be guilty of the crime, for such it would be, of putting into the hands of the unprepared man the terrible temptations attendant

* Arhat: a Master of Life.

upon the acquiring of technical instruction as to nature's inner secrets. Only he is prepared whose psychic nature is unassailable; and preparedness is achieved through a long period of training, and by the use of the creative will.

But the first steps in training can be taken at any time. Life itself provides the opportunity. Through the gradual refining influence of suffering and the disciplines of experience, the very quality of our psychic nature changes little by little following the natural upward urge towards racial improvement. It becomes purer, less vacillating and wayward, more sensitive to the magnetic pull towards its spiritual parent within. Discrimination, a quality of the spirit, begins to develop. The purpose of life takes on a new and profounder significance. The mystery of the One Life flowing through all beings gradually turns one away from the small attentions of the personal self to embrace a wider circle of sympathies and interests.

By such gradual development one becomes prepared to take a further step. No one who is ready is ever denied the opportunity to advance. Yet it was not methods for developing powers that the Mahātmas who initiated the modern Theosophical Movement offered. Powers fascinate the human mind because to us, however spiritually conceived, they imply the ability to *have* something for ourself; to rise above our fellows; to excel rather than to serve. Our motives are of course mixed. We do entertain altruistic ideals; but the higher forms of selfishness are very subtle indeed, and altruistic motives are very easily submerged

under the excess of egoism that grows *pari passu* with our psychic, or, let us say, even spiritual, development.

What the Theosophical Movement offers is an opportunity to all lovers of humanity to do altruistic work, illuminated by the light of a comprehensive philosophy which explains the causes of the miseries and inequalities in the world. It was founded to help direct altruism along constructive channels, and to show that whole-hearted cooperation in such work was the safest way to higher development. The dynamic energy to give the Movement power to overcome every obstacle is not generated by striving to learn tricks of the occult arts, but by arousing a burning desire to serve. In short, the Theosophical Society was not formed to be a "Hall of Magic." It was to be a nucleus of Universal Brotherhood in the world and "to keep alive in man his spiritual intuitions."

Many Westerners find it very distasteful to contemplate a postponement of personal achievement. They say, "Why must we wait for future lives? We want powers *now*." Such people are fascinated by the various methods of training offered by self-styled "occultists," or by "yogīs" from the East. Nevertheless, an inquiry into these systems and their results shows that even here they do not find satisfaction. Even when such systems are not positively dangerous, they practically all pander to the acquisitiveness of the undeveloped human being. Advertisements say: "You can learn in six weeks to gain power over others." Or,

" You can have everything you want, power, riches, friends."

Yet with all their appeal, these adaptations of oriental systems are quite unsuited to the temperament of the average Westerner with his impatient, restless and undisciplined nature. As a rule we are entirely unable to go through with the difficult courses of training to which the meditative, introspective Oriental is adapted by ages of heredity, by custom and environment. The eager enthusiast gets " stuck half way." Unable to win through to a promised success, and equally unable to regain the more normal if not enlightened state he previously possessed, he does not know where to turn. His foundations are gone and he is likely to become a sort of derelict in life.

The better systems, with a quasi-spiritual appeal, promise the student looking for quick results, the possibility of reaching a state of cosmic consciousness by following a particular course of lessons—for a price. But cosmic consciousness is not to be bought! It is the unalterable rule of the real Teachers that no spiritual teaching shall ever be sold.

Further than this, the human soul has taken millions of years to reach its present stage, and that slow process of unfolding growth which is to culminate eventually in full spiritual enlightenment cannot suddenly be consummated. You cannot over-night make of a soul something that it is not. Its quality and character change slowly. Soul-enlightenment comes as the fruition of lifetimes of diligence and one-pointed effort.

Thus the Theosophical philosophy holds out no false hope. It explains the nature, origin, and destiny of the complex being called man, and provides a grand universal setting in which the awakening consciousness of the aspirant to wisdom views his own progress as inseparable from that of the whole human race, and almost inconsequential in its purely personal aspects. He finds that, far from any barriers being raised to his progressive development, the expansion of consciousness he receives from a study of the Ancient Wisdom and from its application in a life of unselfish service, clears away veil after veil of the lower self-hood. Thus he himself, *by his own self-devised efforts*, brings about those higher stages of training and teaching which lead to the final objective: the attainment of Ātma-Vidyā, the union of the human self with the aspirant's own inner god.

MANUALS IN THIS SERIES

1. What is Theosophy? A General View for Inquirers—C. J. Ryan
2. Reincarnation: A Lost Chord in Modern Thought—L. L. Wright
3. Karma: The Law of Consequences —G. van Pelt
4. The Seven Principles of Man—L. L. Wright
5. After Death—What?—L. L. Wright
6. Evolution—H. T. Edge
7. Rounds and Races: Man's Divine Parentage and Destiny—G. van Pelt
8. The Doctrine of Cycles—Lydia Ross
9. Hierarchies: The Ladder of Life —G. van Pelt
10. The Astral Light—H. T. Edge
11. Psychic Powers—Helen Todd
12. Theosophy and Christianity—H. T. Edge